

Contentment vs Covetousness

1 Timothy 6 - Read this whole chapter

Slavery among believers had to be impossible since there is now "neither slave nor free." But here Paul speaks to "servants (*doulos* - slaves) who are under the yoke." These would at least now be treated as something like "employees" by Christian masters, after the instructions in **Leviticus 25**.

1 Timothy 6:2 (NET) - "But those who have believing masters must not show them less respect because they are brothers. Instead they are to serve all the more, because those who benefit from their service are believers and dearly loved. Teach them and exhort them about these things."

In **verse 6** Paul begins to contrast the way of Babylon or the world with the values of the Jubilee Year expressed in Christ.

1 Timothy 6:6-11 - "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

9 - "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 - "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

11 - "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

Finally, there is instruction for "the rich" - presumably those who are the "masters" in the slave-master relationship:

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NET) - "Command those who are rich in this world's goods not to be haughty or to set their hope on riches, which are uncertain, but on God who richly provides us with all things for our enjoyment. Tell them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous givers, sharing with others. In this way they will save up a treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the future and so lay hold of what is truly life."

"for your enjoyment" - *apolausin* = from which to draw enjoyment. Enjoying something is not sin. But it is when you draw your enjoyment *from* sin -

Hebrews 11:25 - like Moses, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Contentment is drawing your enjoyment in life from what God has given you. The “rich” can then imitate God and give to those in need.

Satisfaction

A Talmudic phrase: "*samayach b'chelko*" - “satisfied with one's portion”

"Ben Zoma said: Who is rich? Those who are happy with their portion." (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 32a also found in Pirkei Avot 4:1)

"A joyful heart makes a cheerful face; A sad heart makes a despondent mood. All the days of a poor person are wretched, but contentment is a feast without end." (**Proverbs 15:13 and 15**)

- The rabbis tried to interpret this proverb in many conflicting ways. The bottom line is that life for someone who is “poor” (lacking God) is wretched, but contentment (with God) provides an eternal feast.

- Ultimately, our lives may be filled with adversity, challenges and unhappy situations. But God gives us purpose and reason for being. Faith leads to contentment despite the circumstances. In fact, dire circumstances, sacrifice and pain enrich the quality of a life of faith because we see more of God.

Solomon Ibn Gabirol, an eleventh-century Spanish poet-philosopher taught: "Who seeks more than he needs, hinders himself from enjoying what he has. Seek what you need and give up what you need not. For in giving up what you don't need, you'll learn what you really do need."

The antidote to coveting is *emunah*, "faith" - faith that all of my possessions are what God wants me to have and all of my neighbor's possessions are what God wants my neighbor to have. Faith that God is in control.

Contentment - like peace - is not passive or aimless. It is positive and active - "lay hold on" eternal life and "follow after" righteousness... The content believer is not distracted, but rather can pursue his objective with zeal.

One aspect of contentment is always to remember what we *deserve*.

The bottom line is that God is the supplier and bestower - not ourselves. We haven't earned anything except condemnation, the "wages of sin is death."

“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail” (**Lamentations 3:22**)

Romans 3:23 - "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"

Romans 6:23 - "For the wages of sin is death"

